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ROXBURY

Census data: Roxbury gained most residents among city neighborhoods

Posted by Matt Rocheleau April 6, 2011 12:00 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Roxbury saw the greatest population increase among Boston neighborhoods over the past decade, though the number of black/African American residents declined, according to Census data recently released by the city.

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Between 2000-2010, Roxbury, including Mission Hill and the Longwood Medical Area, grew by 9,218, or 13.6 percent, to 76,917 residents. It remained the second-most-populated neighborhood, after Dorchester, according to figures the Boston Redevelopment Authority compiled from US Census data.

A surge in both Hispanic/Latino and white residents led the growth in Roxbury. There were 5,338 more Hispanic/Latino residents and 4,584 more white residents compared to a decade ago -- increases of 37 and 40 percent, respectively. The number of Asian residents grew by 1,323 – a 44 percent jump.

Meanwhile, the number of black/African American residents in Roxbury declined by 1,604, a 4.7 percent decrease. The latest figures put the percentage of black/African American residents in Roxbury at 42.4 percent, dropping the neighborhood from second to third for density of residents in that group among city neighborhoods.

At 74.9 percent, Mattapan continues to have far and away the highest portion of Black/African American residents, Hyde Park has a black population of 47.3 percent.

Boston's population grew by 4.8 percent in the past decade to 617,594, according to the latest figures. The Hub remained a "majority-

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minority" city as 53 percent of residents are of a non-white race/ethnicity while 47 percent are white; 22.3 percent are Black/African American, 17.5 percent are Hispanic/Latino, and 8.8 percent are Asian.

While Boston gained more than 41,000 people age 18 and older, the city lost around 13,000 residents under 18. The 11-percent drop was among the more notable statistics for Benjamin Forman, research director at Boston think-tank MassINC.

"There's no question that family households have been replaced by people without kids," Forman said, adding that a trend of fleeing families can often be a sign of gentrification.

The portion of residents 18 years or older in Boston grew in all but five neighborhoods; in Roxbury it rose sharply from 73.2 to 78 percent. Citywide, that portion grew from 80 to 83 percent.

The total number of Roxbury housing units rose over the past 10 years by 10.6 percent to 30,284 – the city's second-highest total. Meanwhile, Roxbury was the only neighborhood that did not experience a rise in its housing vacancy rate. The housing vacancy rate dropped slightly from 7.8 percent to 7 percent.

Citywide, housing grew by around 25,000 units, or 8 percent, however, vacancies also rose by 60 percent. Around 5 percent of Boston homes were empty in 2000; in 2010, around 7.25 percent of housing was vacant.

Boston's neighborhoods have no officially-defined boundaries, according to the BRA. In order to sort census data by neighborhood, the city department said it used a combination of ZIP codes and zoning boundaries to define each neighborhood's borders.

While the [neighborhoods the city has mapped out](#) for census number crunching by-and-large match how most perceive Boston's configuration, the city acknowledged some may dispute how the BRA has defined where neighborhoods begin and end.

"Everyone has their own definition of 'their' neighborhood -- the best part about Boston is there is such pride in the question -- and therefore there are no official boundaries because if there were, we'd have 617,594 different opinions," said spokeswoman Susan Elsbree.

The department plans to release additional maps and is also [fielding individual requests](#) to have data provided based on customized neighborhood boundaries.

To simplify city data analyzed for this report, Boston.com grouped, as follows, smaller neighborhoods and districts into other, larger areas creating a total of 18 city subsections: Beacon Hill includes the West End; Downtown includes Chinatown and the Leather District; Roxbury includes Mission Hill and the Longwood Medical Area; South Boston includes the South Boston Waterfront; and the South End includes Bay Village. The Harbor Islands – with a combined population of 640 and 535 residents during the 2000 and 2010 census, respectively – were not used in this analysis.

However, raw data is still available [here](#) for each smaller neighborhood, district and islands that the BRA defined.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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